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WALL OF STEEL AWAITS THOSE WHO BULLY CHINA: XI JINPING

The warning comes as the Communist Party celebrated its birth centenary with a massive show of force on Thursday

HAILS BEIJING'S RISE AS IRREVERSIBLE

Xi hailed China's irreversible rise in his keynote address at a ceremony in Tiananmen Square, and said those who bully Beijing "will find themselves on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people". His comments have come amid a growing strain in China's relations with a number of countries including India and the US P12

71-AIRCRAFT SHOW OF FORCE

- Xi reiterated China's commitment to reunite Taiwan with the mainland and hit back at criticism on crackdown and internment
- Seventy-one aircraft participated in the ceremony, including China's most advanced J-20 stealth fighter jets. Xi said China will continue to modernise its armed forces to take on its enemies

1949

WAS WHEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY SEIZED POWER IN CHINA

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

SPECIAL COUNCIL SESSION TO DISCUSS GST RELIEF, SAYS FM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

UNION Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said GST compensation for all states, including Karnataka, is being worked out. On a two-day visit to the state, Nirmala told media persons that all concerns regarding the GST compensation will be discussed at a special session of the GST council. "I have promised to hold a special session where we will discuss all GST compensation-related issues," she said.

Many states, including Karnataka, have asked for an extension of the GST compensation period beyond 2022 when it is set to end. This year, the amount is expected to be around ₹18,000 crore. During the last GST council meeting, Home Minister and Karnataka's representative in the GST council, Basavaraj Bommai, had sought pending dues of ₹11,000 crore to Karnataka. The state has so far received ₹1,776 crore from the total pending dues in this fiscal.

When asked about pending GST dues towards Karnataka, the minister only said that compensation for all states is being worked out.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who is on a two-day visit, in Bengaluru on Thursday | VINOD KUMAR T

"I can't tell you off the cuff. These are amounts which are determined based on the formula which was arrived at last year and that is the basis on which the distribution will start," she said, when asked how much compensation Karnataka will receive this fiscal year.

The Union Government has decided to borrow and pass it on as GST compensation to states just like last year to make up for losses arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the 2020-2021 fiscal, the Centre had borrowed and passed on ₹12,047 crore to Karnataka to offset losses arising out of the pandemic in GST compensation.

NATIONWIDE	JUNE 30	JULY 1
Fresh cases	45,951	48,786
Recoveries	60,729	61,588
Deaths	817	1,005

KARNATAKA	JUNE 30	JULY 1
Fresh cases	3,382	3,203
Recoveries	12,763	14,302
Deaths	111	94

EUA SOUGHT FOR ZYDUS CADILA JAB

Drug firm Zydus Cadila on Thursday said it has applied for emergency use authorisation (EUA) with the Indian drug regulator for its three-dose Covid-19 vaccine ZyCoV-D, and plans to manufacture 10-12 crore doses annually P9

COVOVAX TRIAL ON KIDS HAS TO WAIT

India's apex drug regulator on Thursday turned down a proposal by the Serum Institute to test Covovax vaccine on children saying it first needs to evaluate safety and immunogenicity data from the ongoing bridging trial in adults P9

9 EU nations OK Covishield vaccine to permit entry

WHO to share status of Covaxin's EUA request by mid-August

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

NINE of the European Union's 27 member states have so far recognised India's Covishield vaccine for allowing entry of travellers into their respective countries. In other words, those who already have double shots of Covishield can fly in and out of those nine countries for business or pleasure without hassle but not into the rest of the EU member states.

The nations that green-lighted Serum Institute of India's Covishield are Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Greece, Ireland, Spain, Iceland, Estonia and Switzerland. The approvals came after intense diplomacy with India playing the reciprocal policy card on exemption from quarantine. It meant that travellers from EU member states that do not recognise Covishield as well as Covaxin produced by Bharat Biotech will face mandatory quarantine upon arrival in India.

While the nine countries have accepted Covishield, they are uneasy about Covaxin because it is yet to get the World Health Organisation's approval. New Delhi is learnt to be okay with it and may not press the Covaxin matter till the WHO takes its call. The first hint of a WHO timeline on Covaxin came on Thursday when it said clarity on its emergency use approval should be available by mid-August.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA), the EU's top regulatory body, has approved only four vaccines — Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech), Spikevax (Moderna), Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson). Vaxzevria and Covishield are different only in their brand names and their manufacturing address. The EMA, however, allowed member states to amend the rules to let people enter after taking any other WHO-approved vaccine.

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

June 30 **25,14,153 doses**

July 1 **38,17,661 doses**

TOTAL DOSES: 33,98,28,356

European war heats up

Quarterfinals of the Euros will begin today with Spain taking on Switzerland at 9.30 pm followed by Belgium vs Italy (12.30 am)

AGAINST ALL ODDS, THEY ARE HERE

Czech Republic, Ukraine, Denmark, Switzerland... these aren't countries that usually play in the last eight. But thanks to a few reasons – goalscorers, attacking flair, lot of grit and a kind group – they have reached this stage. Take for example Czech and Denmark. One of them will be in the semifinals, something that's happened only once previously this century (in 2004).

IS IT ACTUALLY COMING HOME?

Even if a few of the big boys complete the top eight, the journey that England have been on make them favourites. Tournament football is usually won by sides that don't concede and England are yet to concede. That the semifinals and final is also in Wembley is also a big advantage (if they do beat Ukraine in Rome on Saturday). So, yes, it could well come home | P15

State plans more easing up, but experts advise caution

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WHILE neighbouring Maharashtra has decided to continue with its curbs, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa is expected to announce further relaxations and may even lift the weekend curfew in the state from July 5.

While a meeting in this regard will be held on Friday evening, experts from the Technical Advisory Committee were unaware of the development. They have expressed concerns over the hurry in opening up all economic activities or lifting curfews at a time when neighbouring states, including Kerala, are witnessing a surge.

"A meeting will be held with the CM on Friday evening to decide on the issue," said Deputy Chief Minister Dr C N Ashwath Narayan who also heads the State's Covid 19 Task Force.

However, experts feel that the state should perhaps wait for the next two weeks before announcing more relaxations.

CONTINUED ON: P4

MINISTER'S AIDE HELD FOR CHEATING

A close aide of Minister for Social Welfare B Sriramulu was arrested by CCB police in connection with a cheating case| P5

EXPRESS HEAD

Quota issue: SC junks Centre's review plea

New Delhi: The apex court has dismissed the Centre's plea seeking review of the May 5 majority verdict which held that 102nd Constitution Amendment took away states' power to declare Socially and Educationally Backward Classes for grant of quota in jobs and admissions | P9

Pay ₹25 more for cooking gas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

AFTER a three-month lull, oil marketing companies (OMCs) on Thursday raised the price of domestic LPG by ₹25.5 per cylinder, sending prices for both subsidised and unsubsidised consumers in Delhi to ₹834.50. In Chennai, Mumbai, and Kolkata, unsubsidised prices rose to ₹850.50, ₹834.50, and ₹861, respectively. A cylinder of 14.20 kg, which until June 30, costed ₹812 in Bengaluru, will now cost about ₹837.50 from July 1.

The OMCs have not officially released the price notification but industry sources confirmed the price hike. LPG prices have soared a sharp 40% from ₹594 per cylinder in November 2020 to the current ₹834.50. Compared with the rise in petrol and diesel prices in the past year, where prices have touched the ₹100/litre-mark in many places, LPG prices have been increased seven times between December 2020 and now, but revised downward just once. Prices were cut by ₹10 on April 1, ahead of the Assembly polls. The latest price rise has been primarily driven by the recovery in global crude oil prices, which have reached pre-pandemic levels after sinking to multi-decade lows in April last year.

Unsubsidised LPG prices are now higher by ₹28 compared to pre-pandemic levels. It works out to be costlier by ₹231 for subsidised consumers as the government eliminated most DBT LPG subsidies when crude prices tanked last May, but did not restore them when oil prices rose.

Industrial sector contracts in June

Manufacturing sector activities contracted for the first time in 11 months in June amidst a rise in Covid cases

Bad loans may swell to 9.8%, says RBI

Banks' gross non-performing assets could rise to 9.8% by March 2022, according to an RBI report | P13

Not much done to deal with drone threat

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

THE recent drone attack at the Indian Air Force station in Jammu has not come as a surprise to many who are privy to the country's security apparatus and intelligence infrastructure. The threat had been swirling in the air for quite a long time now.

"It was known at least a decade ago to the security agencies that unmanned low flying objects — drones, or even paragliders — could be weaponised by enemy countries to launch an attack against India. But no concrete steps were taken then to control the drone nuisance. The IAF, at the request of the Ministry of Defence, could have been tasked with surveillance and licensing of drones because they have the expertise. But decisions were taken at the top level in 2015 to hand over the role to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which meant that the police will monitor drones," said sources, who did not wish to be named. It is only after the Jammu attack that the Centre is mulling a stringent policy on licensing and use of drones.

Picture for representation

Sources added that there is "no systematic database yet on how many drones there are in private possession, who owns them; how and for what purpose they are being used. Most drones are manufactured in China and can be easily purchased online," they added.

Citing several incidents, where reportedly there were "credible inputs" of a drone attack, sources pointed out that just before the 2015 Aero India show here, there were threat perceptions of drone attacks to sabotage the show, which was inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi. P7

Activist Akhil Gogoi walks free after court dismisses terror charges

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR AND SANA SHAKIL @ Guwahati / New Delhi

ASSAM's jailed activist and sitting MLA **Akhil Gogoi** on Thursday walked out after over a year of incarceration. Observing that blockades without incitement to violence is not a terrorist act, a special NIA court in Guwahati cleared Gogoi and three others of all criminal charges including those under the stringent UAPA.

The court said Gogoi's speeches "did not incite violence and rather appealed to the people to maintain peace and not indulge in violence".

The activist, who won the Assembly poll from jail, was charged under several UAPA and IPC sections for his alleged role in violent CAA protests in December 2019.

"I spent more than a year and a half in jail. A case was filed against me for my links with the CPI (Maoist). In another, I was charged with inciting violence during the anti-CAA agitation. The court has proved these were fake charges," Gogoi told reporters.

Dismissing charges of sedition against Gogoi and three others – Dharya Konwar, Bitu Sonowal and Manas Konwar – the court noted that "though the law of sedition continues in our statute book, its colony legacy cannot be overlooked."